



# **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks**

Wildlife Division  
1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
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Helena, MT 59620

June 20, 2008

Dear Interested Person:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks is requesting public input on the Commercial Use Plan Environmental Assessment. The comment period is from June 23, 2008 to July 14, 2008. Please email [fwpwld@mt.gov](mailto:fwpwld@mt.gov) or mail comments to Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Attn: Commercial Use Plan EA Comments, 1420 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, P.O. Box 200701 Helena, Mt. 59620.

In 2006, the FWP Commission adopted administrative rules that now oversee commercial use that occurs on FWP land, including Wildlife Management Areas. The rules identify the types of commercial activities allowed and prohibited on FWP-owned properties, the permits required to conduct commercial use, the permit application processes, and the allocation of permits.

In conjunction with developing the administrative rules, FWP conducted an environmental assessment (EA) that examined commercial use on FWP land, including WMAs. That EA examined the issue of whether or not to authorize commercial use at WMAs. After reviewing public comments both for and against allowing commercial use at WMAs, the FWP Commission adopted rules stating that FWP may authorize commercial uses at a WMA to ensure WMAs would be managed carefully since they are unique places with a special wildlife habitat purposes. Because their focus is on wildlife habitat, the rules prohibit commercial hunting and fishing activities on all WMAs. Additionally, the rules require FWP to prepare a commercial use plan before authorizing commercial use at a WMA, and that the plan identify the types of commercial use that may be authorized at the site; the terms, conditions and volume of commercial use that may be authorized; and the methods for allocating commercial use permits.

Rather than developing an individual plan for each WMA, FWP determined that it would be more efficient and beneficial to develop an overarching statewide commercial use management plan for all WMAs and implementation plans for those sites where FWP anticipates authorizing commercial use. This approach is intended to produce a consistent evaluation and decision-making process that can be used by the various FWP administrative regions.

This EA assesses the proposed implementation of the Commercial Use Management Plan for WMAs. The proposed plan identifies the types of commercial activities that may be

authorized at a WMA; the, permit terms, conditions, and volume of commercial use that may be authorized; and the methods for allocating commercial use permits on WMAs. See *Appendix B* for a copy of the proposed Commercial Use Management Plan.

The purpose for the management plan is to provide overarching guidance to FWP staff for *evaluating requests* to conduct commercial use on a wildlife management area and *administering commercial use permits*. This plan would ensure the process and terms for permitting commercial activities on WMAs is consistent through the seven FWP regions and the allocation methods for the number of permits issued per activity is in line with the management objectives of the individual WMA.

The FWP Commercial Use Rules (ARM 12.14.150(2)) require the development of a commercial use management plan prior to authorizing commercial use at a wildlife management area. The rules state that the plan shall identify:

- 1) the types of commercial use that may be authorized at the WMA;
- 2) the terms, conditions, and volume of commercial use that may be authorized;  
and
- 3) the methods for allocating commercial use permits.

**Objectives:**

1. Provide clear direction on the type, timing, duration, and amount of commercial use that may be authorized at a WMA.
2. Establish a consistent statewide permit application process and fees.

**DECISION:**

Whether FWP will decide to adopt a final Commercial Use Plan for commercial activities on WMAs.